



Inez Moore Tenenbaum
State Superintendent of Education

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

August 27, 2002

TO: District Superintendents
District Transportation Personnel

FROM: Donald Tudor, Director
Office of Transportation

SUBJECT: Carry-on Items to be Transported on School Buses

Over the past several weeks, the questions regarding the transporting of band instruments on school buses have reached the State Department of Education (SDE). The SDE's position on this issue has not changed since it was originally stated in a letter dated April 1, 1992, and mailed to District Superintendents and District Transportation Directors. The following excerpt from that letter explicitly outlines the SDE's position:

Band instruments, or other items, carried on a school bus must be of such size that they can be transported in the student's lap. This is necessary to insure that all items are kept under the control of the student at all times in case of an accident or an emergency.

The United States Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Standard 17, Pupil Transportation Safety, reads in part:

...baggage and other items transported in the passenger compartment should be stored so that the aisles are kept clear and the doors and emergency exits of school vehicles remain unobstructed at all times.

School district compliance with this standard is mandatory. No student carry-on items can obstruct the orderly emergency or non-emergency exiting of the school bus. Securement of carry-on items prohibits them from becoming flying objects in the event of an accident. Items on the seats, floor, or obstructing the aisles endanger all students on the bus.

School district transportation personnel are requested to use prudent judgement in determining the instruments that will be allowed on buses under these conditions. Consideration should be given to the size of the instrument as well as the size and physical characteristics of the student in determining each instrument that is acceptable on a school bus.

Should you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Doug Hamrick at (803) 734-8246.

DNT/bc